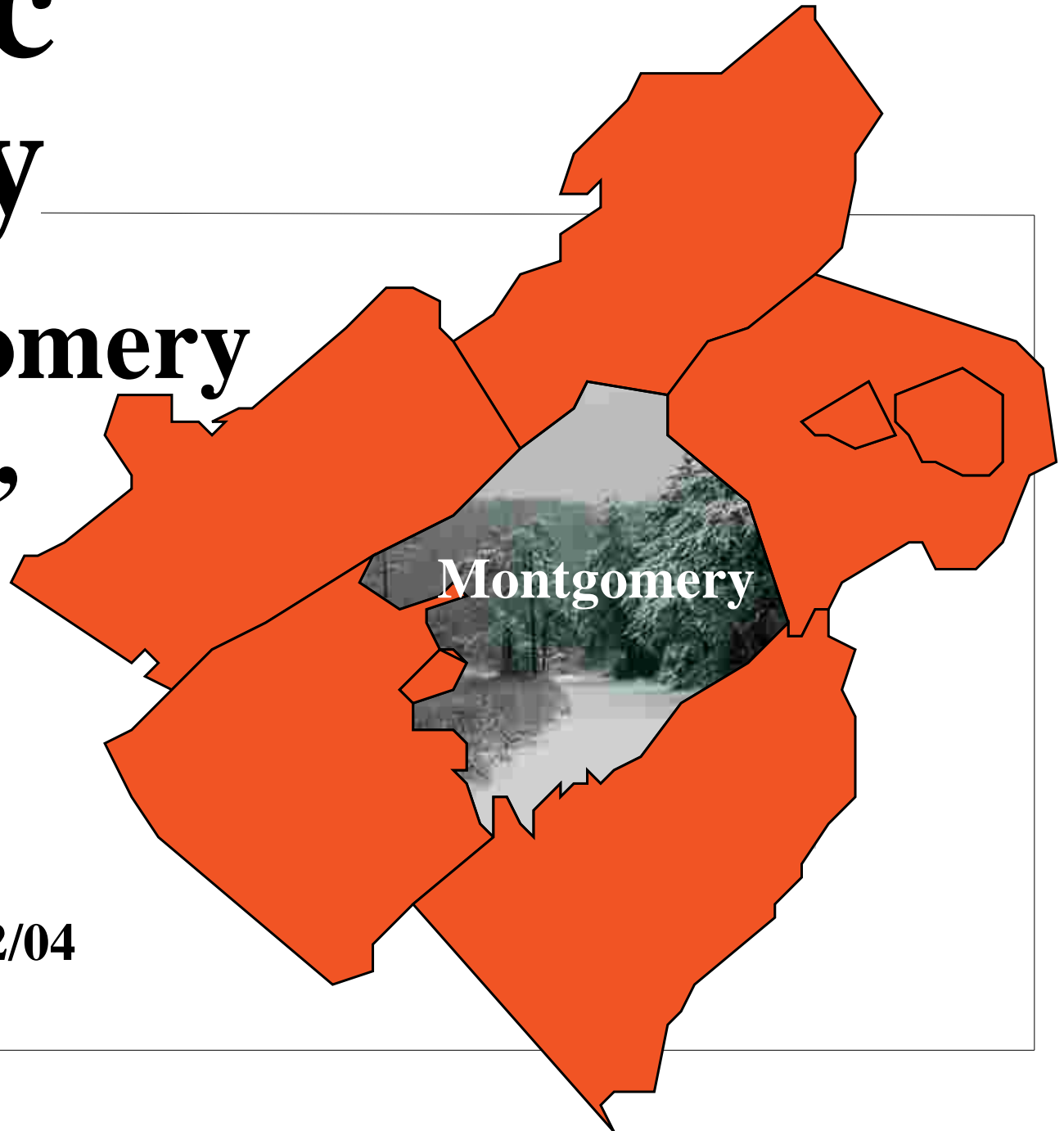


Public Safety

**Montgomery
County,
2025**



Adopted: 10/12/04

Public Safety: Executive Summary

The Safety Chapter, encompassing fire and rescue, law enforcement, and animal control facilities and services in Montgomery County, focuses on five key issue in the provision of safety-related services:

- Management Structure, including strategic plans, hazard mitigation plans, and GIS support;
- Public Involvement, including citizen academies;
- Future Capital Facilities, including CIP funding and cash proffers;
- New Development, including site plan reviews, 911 addresses, house numbers, and street names; and
- Regional Opportunities, including the development of a centralized, regional (Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Montgomery County, and Virginia Tech) 911 call center.

Public Safety: Introduction

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

The community survey asked participants to rank two issues related to public safety: 1) support of fire and rescue, and 2) police/sheriff services (law enforcement). Not surprisingly, given the events of recent years, both issues ranked very high. Fire and rescue was the number one issue of the forty-one issues raised in the survey (mean ranking of 4.39), with 88% of participants ranking it either important (22%) or very important (66%). Support for fire and rescue was universally strong, regardless of the demographic variations.

The same held true for the issue of police/sheriff services, which had a mean score of 4.31. Of those who participated, 86% rated police/sheriff services as either important (22%) or very important (63.8%). Only 4% of respondents felt that police/sheriff services were either minimally important (2%) or not important (2%). As with fire and rescue, police/sheriff services garnered almost universal support, again, regardless of demographic variation, with one notable exception. A higher percentage of women (70%) rated police/sheriff services as very important, compared to 54% of men.

The majority of written comments concerning fire and rescue dealt with the need for new facilities (specifically in the Elliston area), paying fire and rescue personnel, increased training, better equipment, public outreach through education, and “involvement in the community.”

In terms of police/sheriff services, participants cited a number of specific concerns in their written comments, including the need to enforce existing ordinances (traffic, litter, noise, nuisance, and leash laws), increasing the number of law enforcement officers in the County, and increasing financial support for law enforcement.

Students had far more to say than did their adult counterparts. Again, while it is a reflection, in part, of the events of the last few years; it also reflects, interestingly enough, a broader range of concerns, including the need for more animal shelters, the prevalence of bullies in schools, a concern about automobile accidents, the lack of light at night, too few law enforcement officers, drugs, drinking, and trash.

In their letters to the Board of Supervisors, the students had a number of specific suggestions. One student suggested that the County needed to “get police to direct traffic at intersections where there aren’t any traffic lights.” Other students suggested that the “police could clean up pollution,” and “fine people for littering.” One commented that “if police fine

the people that litter the world might not be filled with trash...that would make the world more beautiful place.” The most common comments, however, from the students mirrored their adult counterparts: more police, more fire and rescue personnel, and better pay. It was clear from the written comments, that the majority of students who participated in the survey supported a greater public safety presence, especially in their schools and communities.

CURRENT AND HISTORICAL TRENDS AND CONDITIONS

Fire and Rescue

In 2002, the Montgomery County Board of

Supervisors hired the EMSstar Group, LLC to assess current conditions and future fire and rescue needs.

In 2002, there were five fire departments with 137 volunteers and four rescue squads, with 184 volunteers. Only Blacksburg and Christiansburg currently have full-time, predominantly administrative, paid staff. In

comparison to other counties in the New River Valley, Montgomery County has the lowest personnel rate of fire department (21.6 per 10,000 in population) and the second lowest personnel rate for rescue squads (18.1 per 10,000 in population).

For the rescue squads located in the two towns, the County provides partial facilities

support, sharing the cost with the towns. The County provides full facilities support for the fire and rescue stations in the unincorporated areas of the County. In addition, the County covers equipment costs for all of the fire and rescue units through annual CIP disbursements. Currently, Montgomery County is in the process of replacing two of the stations: Elliston-Lafayette and Longshop-McCoy.

According to the EMSstar report, there are a number of issues facing the County in terms of the provision of adequate and timely service, including: 1) availability of volunteer personnel between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.; 2) the provision of ALS care; 3) lack of funding oversight and accountability; 4) lack of technical assistance; 5) lack of countywide central dispatching; and 6) no centralized or standardized data collection (response times, staffing levels, and critical vehicle and equipment failures). As the report noted, “the county does not aggregate data and as such cannot adequately look at the total delivery of service for the constituents it serves.” On the positive side, EMSstar noted that “service placement appears to be well distributed for the present population of the county; however, future growth and development will require additional services and stations.”

The Blacksburg Comprehensive Plan proposes the creation of a central answering point for public safety agencies within Montgomery County. The center would receive police, fire, and EMS emergency requests from the public through an Enhanced 911 telephone system. In addition, non-emergency calls for these agencies would also be processed by the center. The center’s mission would be to enhance the quality of life of every person in Montgomery County by receiving and processing 911 emergency calls and non-emergency calls in order to dispatch police, fire, and EMS units in a prompt, efficient, courteous, and professional manner.

In addition, Blacksburg is currently considering a state-of-the-art training facility for police, fire, and rescue. It would include

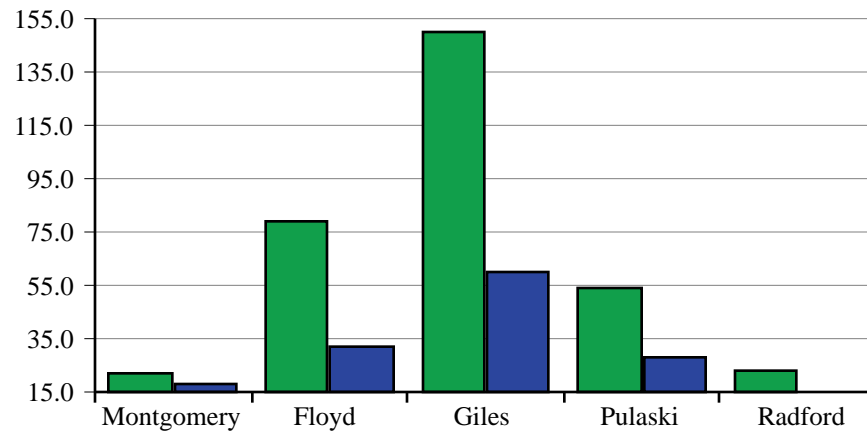
Public Safety: Community Survey Mean Results, 2003



Mean Score	
Fire & Rescue Services	4.39
Police/Sheriff Services	4.31
Mean Score for all Issues	3.65

Note: Forty-one issues were included in the “rate this issue in terms of importance” portion of the community survey. A mean score was calculated for each of the 41 issues, as well as for the total of all issues. Issues with scores higher than 3.65 (the mean for all issues) indicate that the majority of respondents rated the issue greater importance; a score lower than 3.65 indicates that the majority of respondents rated the issue of less importance than the on average. The scale for the survey was: 0=no response; 1= not important; 2=minimally important; 3=moderately important; 4=important; and 5=very important. Source: 2003 Community Survey, Montgomery County, Virginia.

Montgomery County: Fire and Rescue, 2003



■ FD: Rate per 10,000
■ RS: Rate per 10,000

Sources: 1. EMSstar Report, 2003; New River Valley Alliance, 2000; U.S.Census Bureau, 2000 Census (Table DP-1)

	#of Vehicles	Median Age of Equipment
Blacksburg FD	7	1992
Blacksburg RS	13	1997
Christiansburg FD	12	1990
Christiansburg RS	11	1994
Elliston-Lafayette FD	9	1988
Longshop-McCoy FD/RS	12	1990
Riner FD	10	1993
Shawsville RS	8	1999

	Fire Department Personnel	Rescue Squad Personnel	FD: Rate per 10,000	RS: Rate per 10,000	Population
Montgomery	181	151	21.6	18.1	83629
Floyd	110	45	79.3	32.4	13874
Giles	250	100	150.1	60.0	16657
Pulaski	190	99	54.1	28.2	35127
Radford	36	17	22.7	10.7	15859

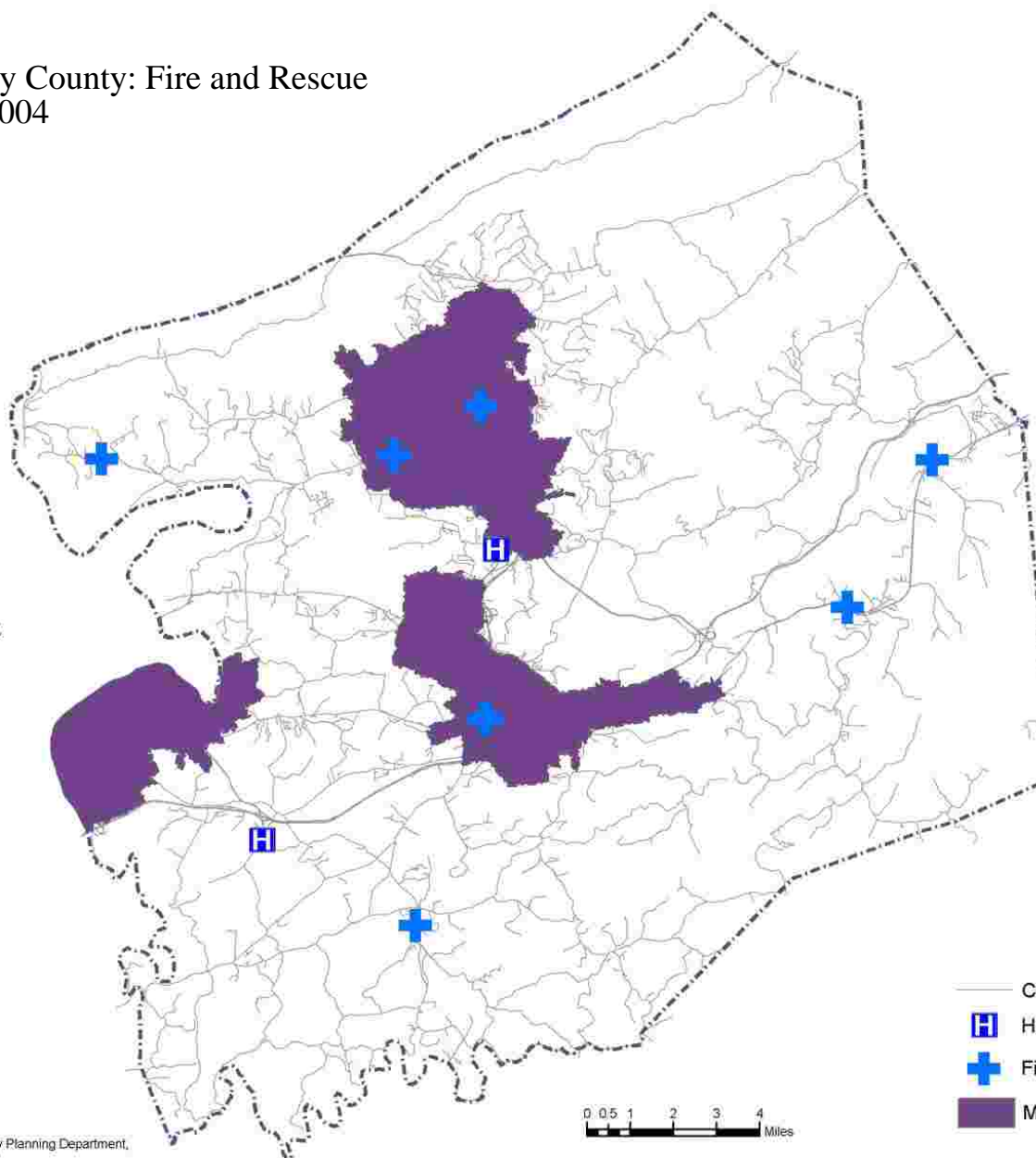
classrooms with audio/video equipment, a driving range, a firearms range, a rope tower, and a fitness building. The Blacksburg Comprehensive Plan states that this new complex would not only consolidate necessary training facilities, but it would also greatly enhance public safety training for Town staff and its neighboring jurisdictions.

Sheriff's Department

According to the 2003-2004 Budget, the Sheriff's Department had 111 fulltime employees and one part-time employee, and accounted for, along with fire and rescue, 21% of the General Fund Budget (the General Fund represents 26.6% of the overall budget). In FY03, the County covered 34.8% of the cost of the Sheriff's Department, with the rest coming from the State budget. In addition to law enforcement, the sheriff's department provides support for the , dispatching (including 911 emergency calls), jail operations, emergency services and civil defense, and a significant public outreach program.

The Sheriff's Department's public outreach and community based program, most specifically their citizen academy, based on an English model, provides a useful model for future academies in other areas. Other community-based and citizen response initiatives include: Project Lifesaver, D.A.R.E, School Resource Officers, Crime Prevention Officers, Class Action instructors, and a Domestic Violence Coordinator.

Montgomery County: Fire and Rescue Facilities, 2004



Legend

- County Roads
- H Hospitals
- + Fire and Rescue Stations
- Municipalities

Prepared by the Montgomery County Planning Department,
GIS and Mapping Services, 6/10/04

Public Safety: Goals

SFY 1.0 Public Safety Goal: Promote and facilitate the provision of superior law enforcement and emergency services (fire and rescue) in order to insure that people have a safe and secure community in which to live, work and raise their families.

SFY 1.1 Management Structure: Establish a single clear management structure for planning and policy setting while striving to achieve consensus among fire, EMS and other health and safety related constituency groups in formulating public policy, procedures and protocols. (1)

SFY 1.1.1 Advisory Board: The "Fire and Rescue Task Force" should be formally commissioned by the Board of Supervisors as an advisory board working with the Emergency Services Office and reporting regularly to the Board of Supervisors. Moreover, the new Advisory Board should be broadened to include law enforcement representation. (2)

SFY 1.1.2 Fire and Rescue Strategic Plan: Develop and ratify a comprehensive strategic plan for fire and EMS services in Montgomery County. This plan should be based on sound demographic and other data. Funding decisions should be made based upon this plan and upon compliance with other requirements established by the Board. (3)

SFY 1.1.3 Response Performance Goals: Establish response performance goals and such other fire and EMS performance goals as may be desired using input from the fire and EMS agencies, county staff, the medical community and the public. (4)

Cross References and Notes

Note: the EMSSTAR report (2003) is available, upon request, from the Montgomery County Public Information Office.

1. See EMSSTAR Recommendations 2.1.1, 2.2.1, .
2. See EMSSTAR Recommendations 2.1.1, 3.1.3.
3. See EMSSTAR Recommendations 3.2.3. When completed, portions of the Fire and Rescue Strategic Plan recommendations should be reviewed and adopted into this plan.
4. See EMSSTAR Recommendations 3.1.3 and 3.3.3

SFY 1.1.4 NRV Hazard Mitigation Plan: Review the draft NRV Hazard Mitigation Plan prepared by NRV Planning District Commission staff for adoption by the County in order to satisfy FEMA requirements for a hazard mitigation plan. (5)

SFY 1.1.5 GIS Support: Continue County GIS support for both law enforcement and emergency services activities especially in order to provide compatible and readily available geodata in support of law enforcement and emergency services activities throughout the County.

SFY 1.2 Public Involvement: Recognize and support the role of citizen volunteers in the delivery of law enforcement and emergency services throughout Montgomery County. Moreover, promote a better understanding of law enforcement and emergency services issues by all County residents.

SFY 1.2.1 Fire and Rescue Involvement: Support the vital role of volunteers in the delivery of emergency services (fire and rescue) throughout Montgomery County.

SFY 1.2.2 Law Enforcement Involvement: Support programs that increase public involvement and understanding of the law enforcement process such as the Sheriffs Citizen Academy and Neighborhood Watch Program. (6)

SFY 1.3 Future Capital Facilities: Use the response performance goals, the future land use policies/map from the Comprehensive Plan, projections for future traffic and road improvements from the MPO, and other pertinent data to develop a plan to locate and fund future law enforcement and emergency services facilities that are necessitated by a growing County population. (7)

Cross References and Notes:

5. The New River Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan is also addressed in ENV 4.3 Floodplains: Public Safety (pg.144) and UTL 4.2: Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (pg.143).
6. Citizen academies are also addressed in PNG 2.2.3: Citizen Academies (Pg. 67).
7. See EMSSTAR Recommendation 3.6.

SFY 1.3.1 Cash Proffers: Develop a cash proffer guideline to address County capital facility needs for law enforcement and emergency services facilities.

SFY 1.3.2 Capital Facilities and Funding: Continue to work, annually, through Capital Improvements Program to identify future capital facility needs and the means for funding them.

SFY 1.3.3. Animal Shelter: Provide adequate, humane animal control services and facilities.

SFY 1.4 New Development: Proactively consider public safety issues in the County's review and approval of new residential, commercial, industrial and institutional developments.

SFY 1.4.1 Site Plan Review: Involve the Emergency Services Coordinator in the site plan review process for major residential, commercial, industrial and institutional developments proposed for the unincorporated portions of the county.

SFY 1.4.2 Street Signs and House Numbers: Work with county departments e.g. General Services (street

Cross References and Notes:

8. Cash proffers and guidelines are more fully addressed in PLU 2.2: Proffer Guidelines (pg.48).

9. The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is addressed in the implementation portion of the Introduction, as well as in PNG 7.1.2 Capital Improvements Program (pg.69); EDU 1.1.3 Facilities Renewal Program (pg. 116) and PRC 2.1.2 Recreational Priorities and Funding (pg. 207).

signs) and Building Inspectors (house numbers) to insure that new structures can be easily located in the field by emergency and law enforcement personnel.

SFY 1.5 Regional Opportunities: On selected issues, a regional approach may provide services more efficiently and effectively. In some cases this may involve the County working cooperatively with Blacksburg, Christiansburg and Virginia Tech. In other cases this may involve the County working cooperatively with other New River Valley governments and possibly local governments in the Roanoke Valley.

SFY 1.5.1 Regional Swift Water Rescue Team: Evaluate the feasibility of County support for a regional swift water rescue team.

SFY 1.5.2 MERIT Emergency Communications Center: Evaluate the feasibility of County participation in a Montgomery Emergency Response Information Team (MERIT) Emergency Communications Center serving the county, Blacksburg, Christiansburg and Virginia Tech.

SFY 1.5.3 Regional Training Facility: Evaluate the feasibility of County participation in the development of a regional training facility for use by fire, rescue and law enforcement personnel.